



President Ollanta Humala Tasso  
President of the Republic of Peru  
Presidence of the Republic  
Jr. de la Unión s/n 1 era cuadra  
Lima, Peru

24th February 2012,

Dear President,

We write to express condolences for the recent tragedy at “Cristo es Amor” rehabilitation center, last January 28th and to urge Peruvian authorities to diminish the likelihood of such events through licensing of drug treatment facilities and measures to protect against involuntary and inappropriate long-term detention of those dependent on drugs. Such measures are in keeping with international standards on drug dependence treatment as expressed by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, and with Peru’s own constitutional and legal health and human rights commitments.

The practices reported at “Cristo es Amor” did not meet minimum international standards. Offering patients religious instruction and a regime of physical discipline rather than medication and evidence-based treatment is neither appropriate nor effective in addressing drug addiction. While this was a private center, governments are obligated to protect their citizens against cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in private and public institutions alike.

Prolonged detention and isolation against patients’ will is contrary to principles of drug dependence treatment articulated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization, which note that detention is justified only in cases where patients represent an immediate threat to themselves or others, and when no other less restrictive alternatives can help achieve safety. Long-term detention of those with drug dependence is also contrary to Peru’s commitment as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), a treaty that Peruvian leadership help make into an international standard.

As you know, in 2006 Peru’s Constitutional Court (Exp 0542-2006-TC) signaled that those dependent on drugs are subject to the protections of the CRPD. The tragedy at “Cristo es Amor” offers an opportunity to speak out for and effect needed reforms, including regulation of the law that authorizes establishment of therapeutic communities, and the creation of standards for licensing drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities, monitoring of treatment offered in such facilities, and a reform to laws or court-guardianship practices that result in unnecessary or prolonged detention.

If it is useful, we would be glad to relay information that might be useful in rethinking Peruvian practices, or to facilitate discussion between Peruvian experts and others in the international arena conversant with international drug treatment and human rights standards. A reform to abusive practices that hurt in the name of healing may be one way to help redeem the memory

of those who lost their lives at Cristo es Amor. We and others in the international community look to you for leadership in the wake of this tragedy.

Yours faithfully,

Ann Fordham  
Executive Director  
International Drug Policy Consortium

John Walsh  
Senior Associate  
Washington Office on Latin America

Holly Catania, JD  
Executive Director  
International Doctors for Healthy Drug Policies

Rick Lines  
Executive Director  
Harm Reduction International

Cc

Señor Dr. Carlos Alberto Tejada Noriega  
Ministro de Salud

Señor Dr. Juan Federico Jiménez Mayor  
Ministro de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Señor Oscar Valdés Dancuart  
Presidente del Consejo de Ministros

Señora Dra. Carmen Masías Claux  
Presidenta Ejecutiva, DEVIDA

Señor Segundo Tapia Bernal  
Presidente de la Comisión de Salud y Población

Señor Alberto Beingolea Delgado  
Presidente de la Comisión de Justicia y Derechos Humanos

Señor Tomas Zamudio Briceño  
Presidente de la Comisión de Defensa Nacional